

Orange County Natural Areas Inventory

CAMP CHESTNUT RIDGE

Updated 2004

Site Number: E04

Size: 281 acres

Site Significance: County

USGS Quadrangle: Efland

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: This setting for this camp is an important link in a chain of ridges that form an upland corridor between the Cape Fear and Neuse River systems. It also preserves a good example of chestnut oak forest, a habitat type that is rapidly disappearing throughout the county due to increased residential development of the ridgetops.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES: Piedmont Monadnock Forest

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: The knoll on which this camp sits is part of a larger system of ridges and monadnocks that run northeast from Chatham County to Oconeechee Mountain. Since these uplands are currently more-or-less undeveloped and still forested, they form both an important wildlife reservoir as well as an overland link between the Cape Fear and Neuse River Basins. Many of our larger or warier species of animals, such as bobcat and wild turkey, require such extensive tracts due to their own foraging needs and their susceptibility to human disturbance. The connection of these uplands to the even more extensive corridor systems along the Haw and Eno rivers further enhances the survival chances of these species within the county, both along the ridges and in the river valleys themselves.

Although this particular site is somewhat disturbed by the camp setting, it nonetheless preserves a good example of chestnut oak forest, the typical community occurring on the rockier, poorer (mainly siliceous) soils of the ridgetops. The canopy is composed primarily of the chestnut oak (*Quercus prinus*), an important forage (mast) producer for wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) and other wildlife. Many large trees are still present due to the relatively natural setting maintained by the camp. While this forest type in general has escaped much of the earlier cutting and development seen on "better," more mesic sites, they are now under heavy pressure due to the building of prestige homes on top of scenic ridges. Any opportunity to protect such woodlands, such as provided by Camp Chestnut Ridge, should be encouraged.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: The western half of the site is managed as a camp in a natural setting; the eastern half is in private ownership, and thus vulnerable to residential development. Camp management and adjacent private landowners should be informed of the significance of the chestnut oak community. Present management practices should be maintained.

OWNERSHIP: Private

REFERENCES: Sather, D. and S. Hall. 1988. Inventory of the Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitats of Orange County, North Carolina, Appendix B: Biological Documentation of Sites. N.C. Natural Heritage Program, DENR, Raleigh, NC.